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SUBJECT J. Edgar Hoover

MARSHALL FRADY: May the 4th, 1972. After almost half a century of power as Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover is dead. He had served under eight Presidents, 16 Attorneys General, longer than anyone else holding such high office in government. During that time he made the FBI into almost a shadow government unto itself, holding many in Washington in fear. Perhaps more than any other bureaucrat in our government's history, this one man, J. Edgar Hoover, imposed his personal vision on Congress, on Presidents, and on millions of Americans.

Who was this man who came to command such reverence, such dread?

PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON: J. Edgar Hoover was one of the giants. He became a living legend while still a young man. And he lived up to his legend as the decades passed.

J. EDGAR HOOVER: May I emphasize that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is as close to you as your nearest telephone.

FRADY: For almost 50 years, this stern bull-terrier of a man seemed the defender of all our Main Street rectitudes, of order, patriotism, discipline. But this is, among other things, a story of illusion and reality, of the wrong inside the good, and of the compulsion for power behind the legend of J. Edgar Hoover.

In the next hour, ABC will examine the consequences of Hoover's quest for power: national security compromised in a World War II case, political use of the FBI, attempted destruction of enemies, intelligence failures in the murder of a

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President, a massive surveillance of hundreds of thousands of innocent Americans.

If ever an institution of American government became the instrument of one man's will for control, it was the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover. But Hoover's ambition was also fed by the politicians he served. And it became, finally, an ambition to control American society itself. In the end, it's a story of how a secret police power came to grow within our democratic institutions. And it remains of the highest importance to ask: How did it happen?

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FRADY: The '20s and '30s: gangsters, machine guns, murders and bank robberies, what seemed to many Americans a national riot of crime.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR: Chief G-man Hoover warns the DAR of crime dangers.

HOOVER: There are today in America 150,000 murderers roaming at large.

FRADY: This was not only the Hollywood image of those times. It was also the public's image.

[Clip of gangster movie]

FRADY: And onto the scene, J. Edgar Hoover and his G-men burst like clean-cut knights in dark business suits.

[Clip of gangster movie]

FRADY: Hoover had made a swift and impressive rise to become the nation's top policeman. He climbed in just five years from Justice Department lawyer to being asked in 1924 to reform a corrupt and ineffective national law enforcement agency. He was only 29.

NEWSREEL NARRATOR: Crime detection expert J. Edgar Hoover of the Department of Justice has speeded up the wheels in the newest anti-crime laboratory. Here in Washington is the long-dreamed-of American Scotland Yard, a reality at last.

FRADY: Hoover proceeded to remake his bureau into one of the most sophisticated law enforcement operations in the world, from 441 agents when he took it over to 8566 when he died. Those agents would prove virtually incorruptible. He set unprecedented requirements for them: accounting or law degrees. Although Hoover virtually ignored organized crime until 1957, his agents were strikingly efficient in most cases: bank robberies,

kidnapings, and in combatting foreign agents, Marxist revolutionary groups, the Ku Klux Klan. There were reasons for the FBI's mystique of excellence.

BOY: Gee, Mr. Hoover, your G-men sure are good. I'd like to be one when I grow up.

HOOVER: Well, if you work hard and play hard and live clean, you'll certainly be one.

BOY: Thank you.

FRADY: But that young man would have found it took a bit more to satisfy Hoover. From his very beginning, Hoover was obsessed with two things: absolute control over his agents and creating a dramatic public image. His compulsion in this was to keep the FBI a close reflection of himself: neat, serious, disciplined. During most of his reign it remained virtually all white, all male, all Christian.

About this man who exercised such power in this country for so long, these are some of the things we know: Hoover stayed with his mother until he was 43, when she died. He never married, never once traveled beyond the United States. He spent almost all of his time with his associate director Clyde Tolson. But the rumors Hoover was a homosexual are discounted by friends and even by enemies. In fact, any deviation from the norm could cost an agent his job: overweight, baldness, minor indiscretions.

This is the late William Sullivan, Hoover's longtime assistant director. ABC News Closeup reporter Pat Lynch has obtained from the Sullivan estate exclusive tapes of a series of interviews Sullivan gave shortly before his death.

WILLIAM SULLIVAN: One day this young fellow got into the elevator with Hoover. The young fellow had a bright red vest on. You know, he was an adolescent and his face was broken out a little bit in pimples.

And so the order went out: Find out who's wearing a red vest today, and his face is pimply. And, of course, we found out after a while. We submitted the name to Mr. Hoover. And he said, "Fire him. And also discipline and punish whoever recommended him for employment. We're not going to have anybody working for us who wears a red vest and has a pimply face."

FRADY: Quinn Tamm, another assistant director, who was rumored to be Hoover's successor.

QUINN TAMM: I thought some of the punishment which was

given to FBI personnel for what I considered minor violations was extreme. I don't think there's any question about that. Transfers, transfers for punishment reasons, especially with agents who had large families, whose children were in school, was sometimes, I thought, needless and thoughtless.

FRADY: Hoover's grim ways of punishing agents who disappointed him or criticized the Bureau were a matter of deep concern, even among Hoover loyalists. A famous example, Jack Schaul (?), an agent for seven years, wrote a letter to his grad school professor mildly complaining about some aspects of Hoover's rule. Hoover found out about it. And Schaul, father of four, his wife dying with cancer, was suspended without pay and transferred to Butte, Montana. He resigned.

And when Hoover's own nephew complained about such measures, Hoover told him to get out of the Bureau.

Along with the harsh discipline over his agents, Hoover showed a nimbleness in taking credit for the work of other law agencies.

MAN: Bureau agents always had their ears open to get valuable information from police departments, but rarely ever gave information back that would have been helpful to those police departments in solving cases. The result was that the FBI got credit for solving many cases on which the local police had done most of the work.

FRADY: But Hoover had learned one elemental principle: publicity, image meant power and a further increase of his institution. Everything he did was to serve that purpose.

Congressman Don Edwards, a former FBI agent.

REP. DON EDWARDS: Mr. Hoover would go to the Appropriations Committee every year and show the Appropriations Committee that for every dollar spent on the FBI, the FBI got back \$1.15 or \$1.20, or whatever the figure might be. And the subcommittee started to wonder about those figures. And so we asked the General Accounting Office to audit those statistics. And the General Accounting Office found out that the statistics really didn't hold water.

HOOVER: Today, all law enforcement presents a united front against so-called Fifth Column activities.

FRADY: In 1939, with war looming closer, President Roosevelt gave Hoover an expanded jurisdiction: espionage and sabotage. But in one famous case, Hoover's eagerness to convert this new authority into yet more celebrity for his FBI wound up

seriously damaging a security operation.

In this secret document, now declassified, a major general complains to Secretary of War Henry Stimson that Hoover's premature breaking of a story about the capture of eight Nazi saboteurs had wrecked our plans for seizing other Nazis in the country.

Lloyd Cutler was one of the government prosecutors in that case.

LLOYD CUTLER: The War Department would have preferred to let the saboteurs make those contacts, those who were still at large, and round up the entire group. That opportunity was never available because Mr. Hoover chose to take the instant publicity that could be gotten for the arrests.

HOOVER: The recent landings of saboteurs from Nazi submarines sounds a new alert for all Americans. These saboteurs were apprehended before they could carry out their plans of destruction.

FRADY: But the fact is, the Nazis were not apprehended by the FBI. Instead, George Dash, one of the leaders of the saboteurs, had to struggle to get himself and the others apprehended.

Seth Kantor (?), journalist and author.

SETH KANTOR: And when he did get in to meet with FBI officials, they didn't believe his story. And when he finally told them where they could find the other saboteurs, well, it dawned on them that he knew what he was talking about.

FRADY: Six weeks later, six of the saboteurs were executed after a secret trial. Dash, despite Hoover's promise of a presidential pardon for cooperating, was jailed until 1948.

Hoover's play to the press had outraged many in the intelligence community, but he was already so formidable a figure, none would criticize him in public. And Hoover's announcement was of value to President Roosevelt. It reassured an uneasy nation that the Nazi threat here was being dealt with.

Indeed, Hoover was never to forget whom he served, the highest keepers of power in the nation. But before he was through, his areas of authority had increased from 32 to 185. Operating out of his office here in the Justice Department, Hoover finally served no interest more faithfully than the further consolidation of his authority, an obsession that he would carry into the coming Cold War.

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FRADY: First it had been the gangsters of the '20s and '30s. Then it was the Nazi menace. Now, with the end of World War II, Hoover found his next great public adversary.

HOOVER: I think that the best antidote to communism is vigorous, intelligent, old-fashioned Americanism with eternal vigilance.

FRADY: The Cold War offered Hoover yet wider prospects for consolidating the power of this Bureau, and was to lead to his first serious extension into the political life of the nation itself. But for all his popular campaigning now against the communist peril, Hoover not only fumbled one of the most notable spy cases of those years, but posed problems for a sensitive investigation of Soviet espionage.

Here at the old Army Security Agency outside Washington, a code expert working with the charred remains of a Soviet code book found on a World War II Finnish battlefield at last cracked the Soviet spy code. This code-breaking has never been acknowledged by the government, and is finally confirmed to ABC News by the man who supervised its use by the FBI.

Using law data like this supplied to it by the Army Security Agency, Hoover's FBI did succeed in apprehending over 200 Soviet spies. The Security Agency's secret code breakthrough opened to Hoover the chance for a virtually unlimited bounty hunt of communist spies. He wanted a broad assault everywhere. This unsettled some of Hoover's own agents with memories of how Hoover's instinct for quick headlines had compromised the Nazi saboteur case.

Robert Lamphere was the FBI's supervisor responsible for the liaison with the National Security Agency. He oversaw the code investigations. Lamphere talks about Hoover with ABC News reporter Pat Lynch.

ROBERT LAMPHERE: I was not always in total agreement with some of the decisions he made.

PAT LYNCH: Such as?

LAMPHERE: On occasion, I would have been less interested in prosecuting a case than I would have been on working the case as a carefully controlled counterintelligence operation, rather than going for the publicity of a major trial and a major exposing of Soviet operations.

FRADY: Only now, in fact, is it fully coming to light

what Hoover's eagerness for quick arrests would have jeopardized. And for the first time, Robert Lamphere publicly discloses what that code breakthrough meant.

LAMPHERE: The deciphered messages gave us the greatest opportunity the FBI will probably ever have to reach in and be on the inside of KGB operations in the United States. And not only to be on the inside and to identify their people, but to understand exactly what it is they're trying to do and how they're trying to do it.

FRADY: The deciphered code led to what was hailed as a major catch for the FBI, the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The Rosenbergs were convicted of passing U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviets, and executed. But the question of their actual guilt provoked a controversy that has continued to this day.

Now Lamphere speaks out on the Rosenberg evidence for the first time and tells ABC News that it was the decoded messages that confirmed for the government the guilt of the Rosenbergs, and that that proof was not introduced at their trial to keep the Soviets from learning their code had been broken.

LAMPHERE: We knew of the Rosenbergs' involvement with the Soviets through KGB messages, through the testimony of numerous people. So there can be no question about their guilt.

FRADY: But despite his image as an anti-communist dragonslayer, Hoover mismanaged one of the most celebrated cases of the Cold War years. Alger Hiss, a former high official in the State Department, was accused in 1948 of being a Soviet agent, largely on the testimony of this man, Whitaker Chambers. Hoover was furious when he learned the case was developing outside his own hands, due to lapses by his own Bureau. And as in the Nazi saboteur case, again his effort became to construct an appearance of having closely tended the case all along.

ALAN WEINSTEIN: The FBI has rewritten history in connection with this case. For one thing, they did not find the major pieces of evidence in the case. It was the House Committee on Un-American Activities that turned up Chambers and called him its first witness. He named Hiss. The FBI had known about Chambers for a decade. It was the Chambers defense lawyers who turned up the famous incriminating pumping papers, actually microfilms and a few papers, which were then submitted to the Justice Department and which proved to be the most damaging pieces of evidence against Hiss.

At each and every stage of this case, J. Edgar Hoover found himself, somehow, the last to know when key pieces of

evidence turned up. It did not make him happy.

FRADY: Despite his failure on the Hiss case, Hoover flourished in the headlines. The Cold War tempted him to venture now into the political course of the nation.

HOOVER: The FBI has been in the front lines of the fight against the communist menace for many years. Its effectiveness can be measured by the intensity with which the communists, their sympathizers, the bleeding hearts, the pygmy politicians, and respectably-cloaked apologists have advanced their attacks on the FBI.

FRADY: The question is, did Hoover supply FBI data to this man, the junior Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph R. McCarthy, whose evangelisms then about the Red Menace enfevered the nation. Perhaps inevitably, a special understanding developed between McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover.

SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY: I think there's only one man that the communists hate more than Roy Cohn. And that's J. Edgar Hoover.

Roy, you might like to add something to this. I don't know.

ROY COHN: Hoover knew that he was basically -- that McCarthy was basically right, that communism was the threat it has proved to be. And that created something of an ideological affinity between the two of them.

On top of that, McCarthy was a very charming, pleasant individual. He was very good company. He was a fun guy.

[Clip of Army-McCarthy hearings]

FRADY: A backfire of public outrage did overtake McCarthy. But the question remains: What part did J. Edgar Hoover play in the crusades of Joseph McCarthy?

JACK ANDERSON: I personally heard Senator McCarthy call J. Edgar Hoover for help. And I gathered from my end of the conversation -- I did not hear Hoover's responses, but it was quite clear from the way the Senator was reacting, the pleasure he showed over the answers, that he was getting help from J. Edgar Hoover.

FRADY: The voice of Hoover's onetime assistant director, William Sullivan.

SULLIVAN: We did give Joe McCarthy a great deal of

information. Joe McCarthy could not have carried on his anti-communist campaign without the assistance given him by the FBI.

Mr. Hoover always spoke very well of Joe McCarthy; and as a matter of fact, defended Joe McCarthy right at the time when McCarthy was a red-hot issue.

FRADY: Along with that collaboration with Joe McCarthy, Hoover used the Cold War years to secure the power and prestige of his Bureau. But, in fact, there still lay ahead of Hoover what would prove a mortal threat to that authority he had spent his career building. It would come on a November noon in 1963 in Dallas.

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[Clip of President John Kennedy's Assassination]

FRADY: There was a sense that anything could happen to us now. The assassination of John Kennedy also became a very particular trauma for J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI. For the nation's chief investigative agency, there could be no greater intelligence disaster. But what Hoover had known before that day in Dallas, intelligence not passed on to the Secret Service or even his own field agents, now placed his name and authority in their greatest jeopardy ever. And to protect against that danger, Hoover pulled out all the stops, even withholding information from the Warren Commission.

It was all to achieve two things: first, to cover himself against any possible later criticisms. Toward that, he quietly administered punishments to 17 agents for negligence. The second imperative was to establish Lee Harvey Oswald as a lone assassin for whose actions no one could be held responsible.

James Hosty, the Dallas agent in charge of Oswald's file before the assassination, was one of those 17 agents disciplined.

He talks here for the first time on television about the assassination with Closeup reporter Pat Lynch.

JAMES HOSTY: It was to the advantage of the upper echelons of the FBI to show that Oswald was a sole assassin. This would reduce the culpability of the FBI for not having, supposedly, kept track of Oswald. And it would also benefit the United States Government as a whole, who did not want to inflame the American public, and thus possibly cause World War III.

FRADY: Lee Harvey Oswald four weeks before the assassination. Already, he had been under FBI investigation for three years. An obscure political drifter. He had defected for

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a time to the Soviet Union. Here, in New Orleans, he was handing out leaflets in support of Fidel Castro.

REPORTER: Are you a Marxist? Do you consider yourself a Marxist.

LEE HARVEY OSWALD: Well, I would very definitely say that I am a Marxist. That is correct. But that does not mean, however, that I'm a communist.

FRADY: While FBI agents in New Orleans were aware of Oswald's sympathies for Castro's Cuba, Hoover himself knew much more, intelligence he did not share with his agents. Even before the Bay of Pigs invasion, Hoover knew from informants that the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA, had contracted with the Mafia in plots to assassinate Castro. Castro had delivered a public warning that he would retaliate against U.S. leaders if these plots did not cease.

But Hoover also knew that despite that warning, the CIA was planning with a Cuban operative still another attempt on Castro's life.

The Bureau also knew eight weeks before Kennedy's assassination that Oswald had traveled to Mexico City and visited the Soviet Embassy, where he met with a key KGB operative named Valery Kostikov.

HOSTY: I have since learned that the FBI Headquarters was aware of Kostikov's full identity prior to the assassination. But in keeping with instructions that had been given to Headquarters, this information was not furnished to me.

LYNCH: And Kostikov was one of the main hit men for the KGB.

HOSTY: He was in charge for the Western Hemisphere.

FRADY: All of this -- Oswald's contact with Kostikov, his Cuban Marxist sympathies, the CIA's continuing campaign to kill Castro, despite Castro's threat of retaliation -- were only possible connections, but would have made up a complex of alarms. Those pieces of information would emerge in later investigations, but at the time were never all put together by the FBI. For whatever reasons, Hoover did not pass on what the Bureau knew to FBI field offices charged with alerting the Secret Service to dangers to the President. Otherwise they may have acted on what they did know.

Three weeks before the assassination, agent Hosty in the Dallas field office had paid a call on Oswald's Russian wife

Marina, whose uncle, it was later learned, was a colonel in Soviet internal security. Hosty's visit prompted Oswald to personally deliver a note to the FBI office threatening action if he were not left alone.

Shortly after the shots in Dallas, Hoover was granted by the new President, Lyndon Johnson, exclusive responsibility for investigating Kennedy's death. Only 17 days, then, after the assassination, Hoover delivered his report to the Warren Commission. Its conclusion: Oswald was the lone assassin, and there was no evidence of a foreign conspiracy.

His task now became to protect that conclusion from any criticisms by the Warren Commission, headed by an old antagonist of his, Chief Justice Earl Warren.

This is how he went about that: To avoid any suspicion that there could have been a lapse by the FBI, he kept secret from the Commission his reprimand of 17 agents. He also withheld from the Commission what he had known about Mafia threats to get rid of the Kennedys. More, he withheld any mention of the threatening note that Oswald had hand-delivered to the FBI's Dallas office. Instead, the note was destroyed, Hosty says, by order of his boss, J. Gordon Shanklin.

HOSTY: I was called in to Shanklin's office and was given the note. And he told me, "Here. I don't want to ever see this again."

LYNCH: What did you do?

HOSTY: I took this as an instruction to get rid of it, which I did.

FRADY: At the same time, Hoover was directly in touch with someone on the Warren Commission itself, then-Congressman Gerald R. Ford. Ford has since minimized his role. But this is the recollection of William Sullivan.

SULLIVAN: He kept us apprised regularly of what went on. He was expected to do it because he was in our stable, in our political stable on Capitol Hill.

FRADY: Not only did Hoover withhold evidence from the Warren Commission, but James Hosty says that information about Oswald's contact in Mexico City with the Soviet official, Kostikov, was removed from his office. Hosty also says he later learned that his answers to the Bureau's own internal investigation of the assassination were changed to make it appear that he was guilty of negligence.

In addition, Hoover withheld from the Commission what he knew of Mafia threats against the Kennedys, Mafia figures closely connected to Jack Ruby, threats Hoover learned about through illegal bugs. Hoover also never vigorously pursued Ruby's connections to the Mafia.

Even though Hoover's hasty report on the assassination insisted that there was no suggestion of a conspiracy, ABC News has learned that Hoover, early in 1964, dispatched one of his most trusted informants, former communist Morris Childs, code-named Solo, to ask Castro what he knew about Oswald. Hosty confirms that trip for the first time, and other sources confirm Hosty's story.

HOSTY: We know that the so-called Solo source made a trip to Cuba and talked to Castro sometime after the assassination, at which time Castro advised the Solo source that Oswald had told his people in Mexico City, some weeks before the assassination, that he wanted to kill Kennedy for them.

FRADY: But instead of pursuing this astonishing report, Hoover turned to another source, a KGB double agent code-named Fedora. Fedora, ABC News has been told, reassured Hoover, through FBI agents, that there was no Soviet-Cuban connection to Oswald in the assassination. And two months after the assassination, a KGB defector turned up, Yuri Nosenko, who was vouched for by Fedora. Nosenko further reassured Hoover about Oswald. Even though Oswald had been a Marine radar specialist familiar with U-2 spy flights, Nosenko declared that Oswald had been of no interest to the KGB during his three years in the Soviet Union.

But last fall, the FBI officially declared that Fedora, who had vouched for Nosenko, was himself a Soviet disinformation agent who had duped the FBI for 20 years. Some high CIA officials, though not all, say the same was true of Nosenko.

Newton Miler headed CIA counterintelligence operations worldwide for 5 1/2 years. This interview with Pat Lynch is the first time he has ever spoken publicly about his CIA experience and Nosenko's story about Oswald.

NEWTON MILER: He claimed that Oswald had had no connection with the KGB, that the KGB and Soviet intelligence authorities had not interviewed him. He said that they had paid no attention to him. He told the FBI and the CIA that there had been no surveillance, that he was not an agent of the KGB, that they had had no interest in him whatsoever. He maintained this from 1964 until, I believe, 1978, at which time he apparently changed his story, because he told the House Assassination Committee that there were seven or eight huge volumes of

surveillance of Oswald when he was in the Soviet Union.

Nosenko, in my opinion, was a disinformation agent, and he was deliberately sent to make contact with the United States to defuse leads which the United States intelligence, in the period '62 and subsequent -- in all subsequent years, was pursuing.

FRADY: But from the beginning, Hoover dismissed all doubts raised about his sources Fedora and Nosenko. Their stories were essential, of course, to Hoover's no-conspiracy theory. And he never sent out agents to follow through on the possibilities of a Soviet-Cuban role in the assassination. Nor did he vigorously explore the possible underworld plot to kill Kennedy.

But the intelligence community's reliance on Fedora and Nosenko has, says Miler, worked great harm.

MILER: It has completely warped many of the U.S. intelligence community's views of Soviet intelligence. It has distorted the lens through which we are supposed to be looking at the threat to the United States by Soviet intelligence.

FRADY: It was not to be until 1979, after Hoover himself had died, that a special House Assassination Committee would criticize the FBI for a seriously flawed investigation that ignored substantial evidence of a conspiracy. Instead, said the committee, Hoover seemed more concerned with protecting the reputation of the Bureau.

Hoover's Bureau survived. And as the nation passed on into the turbulence of the '60s, it became Hoover's compulsion now to keep the country itself a reflection of his own values.

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MARTIN LUTHER KING: Eventually, segregation in public transportation will pass away. Eventually. And I think we should start now preparing for the inevitable.

FRADY: The black awakening in America during the '50s and '60s, a struggle against the structures of racial oppression still left from that old time of racism that had been with us from our beginning. Seldom in our country's experience have the moralities, the right and the wrong, seemed so passionately clear.

To many, Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed the national prophet raised up for this moment. But not to J. Edgar Hoover.

RAMSEY CLARK: At a subjective level, at least, Mr. Hoover had deep racial prejudices. You know, his role in the investigation of Martin Luther King speaks volumes. Here was the non-violent prophet of social change -- what more could a country ask for, you know? -- and subjected to the most vicious sort of investigation, in large part because the man deeply offended Mr. Hoover at a personal level.

FRADY: Hoover's distaste for King turned into darker suspicions when reports were brought to him in 1961 about one of King's close advisers, Stanley Levison.

MAN: Hoover's decision to put wiretaps on Dr. King was based on allegations that Stanley Levison had communist affiliations. The Bureau believed that Levison had these communist affiliations because of information furnished by two extremely important FBI informants, who were code-named Solo.

FRADY: As Garro (?) was the first to reveal, Solo was, in fact, Morris Childs and his brother Jack. Hoover took the information they gave him about Levison. But Garro talks about how it was presented to President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy.

GARRO: Hoover's version, as it was given to the Kennedy brothers, did not contain the very important qualification that the Bureau had only a hypothesis that Levison still had these ties, but that the Bureau had no direct evidence to back up these claims.

LYNCH: So Mr. Hoover did not tell the Kennedy brothers the truth.

GARRO: Mr. Hoover did not tell the Kennedy brothers the whole truth, and what he told them was, in its essence, very misleading.

FRADY: Despite the evidence, Hoover supporters still blame the Kennedys for the wiretaps and bugs.

CARTHA DELOACH: Let's understand the reason why electronic surveillance was put on Dr. King. First, the Attorney General of the United States, Robert F. Kennedy, insisted this be done. Mr. Hoover and the men of the FBI have felt that it was wrong to do that.

FRADY: Though the wiretaps and bugs produced no direct evidence of any communist influence on King, they did provide Hoover with a different possibility, to sabotage King personally. The tapes from that FBI surveillance indicated a highly active sex life by King, which all the more scandalized Hoover.

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On this confidential memorandum about King recently released under the Freedom of Information Act, Hoover scrawled, "King is a tom cat with obsessive degenerate sexual urges."

Mark Felt was with the FBI for 31 years.

MARK FELT: I think that Mr. Hoover was so shocked at King's personal life and his personal conduct that he felt that the man was a hypocrite and was not the right man to lead the black movement.

FRADY: Hoover now had to decide how he might use the sex tapes against King.

DELOACH: The allegation has been made from time to time, and this came out during the hearings held by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, that a tape on Dr. King concerning his sexual exploits was given to newspaper reporters.

Produce a reporter.

LYNCH: Did anyone from the FBI ever approach you with any transcripts related to Martin Luther King?

BEN BRADLEE: Yes. But I was working for Newsweek magazine at that time. Newsweek was running a cover story of Hoover, and we were trying desperately to see him. And finally Hoover agreed to see us. And when I was leaving that interview at the Justice Department, his -- one of his deputies started talking about Dr. King and the existence of some transcripts of tapes, and offered me a look at those tapes. And I turned him down.

LYNCH: Was that Deke DeLoach?

BRADLEE: That was Deke DeLoach. Cartha J. Deke DeLoach.

FRADY: In spite of Hoover's campaign against him, King's fame continued to grow. In 1964 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Within days of that announcement, the FBI mailed an unmarked package of the sex tapes to King's home in Atlanta with a letter which King thought suggested suicide. And FBI surveillance of Martin Luther King continued right up to that April dusk of 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee.

But what King had begun was now loose in America, a spreading tide of protest: the student movement, the poor people's march, women's liberation. Everywhere around Hoover, it seemed the world of his values was in uproar. His vision of America, orderly, pious, patriotic, was under siege. And he

became now a man at war with his times.

In 1971, in Media, Pennsylvania, a dissident group broke into a local FBI office and brought out files which would reveal a massive nationwide covert operation called COINTELPRO, counterintelligence programs. It was a campaign against elements Hoover considered subversive in American society conducted through illegal surveillance, burglaries, harassment, political sabotage, and directed, the best authorities say, against many thousands of innocent citizens.

FRANK CHURCH: They were targeted and they were harassed and they were discredited. And that is very dangerous, particularly when conducted secretly. Because there is nothing more ominous to freedom than a secret police.

FELT: Some of the criticism of the FBI is predicated upon the thinking of today, without any regard at all to what was the tenor of the times in the '60s, when bombs were exploding and when we were in the midst of a very serious war over in Vietnam.

MORTON HALPERIN: In the 1960s you had, really for the first time in a long time in American society, an outpouring of political activity: the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, the beginnings of a New Left movement within the United States. Mr. Hoover decided that all of those things were inconsistent with his notion of what the United States should be like. But he also knew that the activity was lawful and that there was no way that it could legally be stopped. And so he set about secretly to seek to destroy those activities. And to a large extent, he succeeded.

LETTY POGREBIN: When I was looking at the 1377 pages in the women's liberation movement file, I found astounding evidence that they were there when there was four of us and five of us and six of us, whether it was in a Blimpy restaurant or in a person's apartment on East Sixth Street or in a Baltimore day-care center. They were everywhere.

FRADY: Hoover even used COINTELPRO methods on many individuals.

WILLIAM TURNER: After I left the FBI and became publicly critical of some of the policies of J. Edgar Hoover, at that point the FBI kept very diligent watch on me. I know that because I have now obtained, under the Freedom of Information Act, my file, and it consists of some 17 volumes of 200 pages each, a total of almost 4000 pages. And it is very clear that the FBI tried to wreck my career and that Hoover overrode this whole campaign against me, because his scrawlings are very apparent throughout the files.

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FRADY: Los Angeles Times reporter Jack Nelson. The FBI also kept a file on him.

JACK NELSON: And J. Edgar Hoover himself met with the then-general manager of the Los Angeles Times, Robert Nelson, and spent three hours in him in almost a tirade talking about me and how I have a Jekyll-and-Hyde personality and how I was a drunk. It was obvious he not only was trying to discredit me, but, if he could, ruin my career. And, of course, the Los Angeles Times stood behind me, and my stories were accurate.

FRADY: But Hoover, an aging figure now within the mammoth bureaucracy he had created, had another set of files to insure that nothing would ever likely dislodge him. They were files on the mighty of Washington themselves: Congressmen, Senators, even Presidents.

PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON: I have just now signed an executive order exempting you from compulsory retirement for an indefinite period of time.

And again, Edgar, congratulations. And accept the gratitude of a grateful nation.

FRADY: And it might have been added, a grateful Lyndon Johnson, who had Hoover conduct covert political surveillance during the 1964 Democratic convention.

From the time of Roosevelt, Hoover's services had always posed a special temptation to those who ruled Washington. The powers they steadily fed him they would then use for their own political convenience. In that sense, Hoover, with all of his own appetites, also became much the creation of those men he served. But their watchdog had now turned into their captor.

SULLIVAN: It wasn't very long before all the leadership of the Bureau in Washington and throughout the country heading these offices, it wasn't very long before they knew exactly what he wanted, you know. They knew damn well that he wanted to get every bit of derogatory information on every Congressman and every Senator that the Washington people could get, and on anybody else in Washington. He didn't have to make [unintelligible]. That passed right on down. They knew what he wanted, and they'd feed it to him.

FRADY: Congressman Henry Reuss of Wisconsin, one of the first to denounce the Vietnam War. His children were civil rights and antiwar activists, but not security risks. Nevertheless, an agent let Reuss know that the Bureau had personal files on his son and daughter.

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Another example, Congressman William Anderson of Tennessee. He criticized Hoover publicly. Hoover's Bureau then distributed personally damaging information about Anderson in his district during a reelection campaign. A Congressman for eight years, Anderson was defeated.

REP. JOHN ROONEY: Anybody who is familiar with my record...

FRADY: In the same way, Hoover protected his patrons. John Rooney of Brooklyn, long Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Appropriations vital to FBI funding, Rooney requested and Hoover supplied FBI data about Rooney's opponent in a 1968 primary, Peter Eichenberry, and Eichenberry lost.

DELOACH: The allegation that Mr. Hoover used FBI files as a power broker or as blackmail, or something of that nature, is probably one of the greatest distorted allegations in the history of mankind.

FELT: COINTELPRO was perfectly proper in 95 or 96 percent of the cases. There were over 2000 instances of COINTELPRO. The Attorney General reviewed and studied every one of them, and he found all but a handful to be perfectly acceptable and proper.

CLARK: I never heard the word COINTELPRO until, when, in the mid-'70s or early '70s? I don't know -- years after I left the Department of Justice.

The idea that you would have, you know, deliberate activities of disruption, interference with the lives and rights of people in the United States never occurred to me.

But as far as any illegal activities were concerned, had I known about illegal activities, somebody would have been prosecuted for them. I have always believed that the first responsibility of law enforcement is against law enforcement which itself violates the law. Because who protects the public when the police violate the law?

FRADY: We asked the current Director of the FBI, William Webster, to comment on the Hoover era. He declined.

Early in the morning of May 2nd, 1972, Hoover died of a massive heart attack. The Nixon White House ordered Hoover's office sealed, the locks changed. His secretary collected his personal files. They were destroyed.

Ironically, one condition Hoover had insisted on when he took over the FBI in 1924 was no political interference. It was

an uneasy bargain, a grant of special power to protect us from the forces of disorder, the most risky power for men obsessed with control. And what happened with Hoover is a troubling parable of how the guardians of our safety can come to most endanger our freedoms.

Perhaps J. Edgar Hoover did no more than he thought we had asked him to do: to keep America safe. But for Hoover that became to keep us safe as he thought we ought to be.

In our democracy, those we must always watch most closely are those we entrust to watch over us.